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THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELOR AND TEACHER-PUPIL RELATIONS.

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AN ATTEMPT WAS MADE TO ASSESS THE EFFECTS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELORS ON FIFTH- AND SIXTH-GRADE TEACHER-PUPIL RELATIONS. A MODIFIED SOCIO METRIC DEVICE, THE TEACHER-PUPIL RELATIONSHIP SCALE, WAS SELECTED AS THE CRITERION. FROM EACH OF SEVEN CLASSROOMS, AN EQUAL NUMBER OF SUBJECTS WAS RANDOMLY ASSIGNED TO EACH OF THREE TREATMENT CONDITIONS--COUNSELING, TEACHER-GUIDANCE, AND CONTROL. ON THE BASIS OF MICHIGAN STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE SCORES, FOUR OF THE SEVEN CLASSROOMS WERE CLASSIFIED AS "DIRECTIVE," AND THREE AS "INDIRECTIVE." THE RESULTS INDICATED THAT THE EFFECT COUNSELORS HAVE ON TEACHER-PUPIL RELATIONS MIGHT DEPEND ON THE TYPE OF CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT FROM WHICH THEIR CONSELEES COME. COUNSELORS WERE FOUND TO ENHANCE TEACHER-PUPIL RELATIONS IN "INDIRECTIVE" TYPES OF CLASSROOMS, BUT TO HAVE LITTLE EFFECT ON TEACHER-PUPIL RELATIONS IN "DIRECTIVE" CLASSROOMS. (AUTHOR)

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## The Elementary School Counselor and Teacher-Pupil Relations

G. Roy Mayer, Gerald D. Kranzler, and William A. Matthes

The relationship between students and their teachers is a highly important one. Research has demonstrated that the quality of the personal-social relationship between teachers and their students is closely related to students' level of academic achievement (Davidson & Lang, 1960; Payne & Farquhar, 1962), self concept (Davidson & Lang, 1960), attitudes (Flanders, 1965), and behavior (Davidson and Lang, 1960). Teachers also appear to vary in the type of influence they have on the child's self concept, attitudes, and behavior (Davidson & Lang, 1960; Flanders, 1965; Staines, 1958).

There is considerable discussion in today's guidance literature concerning the influence an elementary school counselor may have upon teacher-pupil relations. Some such as Ferris (1965) fear that counselor-pupil relationships may damage the close teacher-pupil relationship that usually develops among elementary school teachers and their students. Others (Brison, 1964; Lambert, 1954; Leiter, 1965; Mahan, 1965; Mayer & Munger, 1966; Meeks, 1963; Ohlsen, 1964; and Wilson, 1956) believe that the counselor enhances or improves elementary school teacher-pupil relations.

The investigators are not aware of any experimental studies which have directly dealt with this area of concern. However, a related study by Strickler (1965) indicated that students' attitudes toward their school improved after counseling.

The main purpose of the present study was to compare the effects of three treatment groups--counseling, teacher-guidance, and control--upon teacher-pupil relations in the elementary school. Thus, an answer to the following question was sought: What effect, if any, does an elementary school counselor have on teacher-pupil relations?

#### INSTRUMENTS USED

Teacher-pupil Relationship Scale. This scale is a modified socio-metric device which was developed for the study and used as a post-measure to determine differences in peer perceptions of teacher-pupil relations after the project. It asked each student to rank on a five point scale how well his classmates "get along" with his teacher. An alphabetical list of the classroom students was given to each pupil. They were then verbally asked to do the following:

1. Place the number 1 next to the three students in your classroom who seem to get along the best, or very very well with the teacher.
2. Place the number 2 next to the five students in your classroom who seem to get along pretty well with the teacher, but not quite as well as the three you have already named.
3. Place the number 4 next to the five students in your classroom who seem to not get along very well with the teacher.
4. Place the number 5 next to the three students in your classroom who get along worst with the teacher.
5. Please check and make sure that no student has more than one number beside his name. There should be three 1's, five 2's, five 4's, and three 5's.

Criterion scores were obtained by totaling the rankings each student received from his classmates, multiplying the total by a hundred, and dividing it by the number of students in the classroom. Students receiving no rank were assigned a rank of three. Thus, students who received low scores were rated as "getting along" well with their teachers, while high scores indicated possible teacher-pupil conflicts (i.e., the lower the criterion score, the better the teacher-pupil relationship.)

A preliminary analysis of criterion scores received by subjects selected for the study (see procedure section) yielded a significant difference between sexes ( $P < .05$ ). Classmates were found to rate female subjects ( $M=303.85$ ) as "getting along" better with their teachers than male subjects ( $M=329.67$ );

a finding which adds credence to the instrument's applicability in that several other authors have reported similar results (Davidson and Lang, 1960; Kagan, 1964; and Lippitt and Gold, 1959).

The Michigan Student Questionnaire. This inventory, which was designed through successive standard item analysis procedures by Flanders (1965), was devised to identify classrooms with significantly different teacher behavior and influence. Each student was asked to mark his answer sheet as to whether he "strongly disagreed," "disagreed", "agreed", or "strongly agreed" with questions designed to measure the students' attitudes toward his teacher and school work. The reliability of an earlier form was reported to vary from 0.68 to 0.93 from class to class, with a median reliability of 0.85.

Flanders' research findings have indicated that in high scoring or "indirective" classrooms, the students not only tended to achieve better but that the classroom teachers encouraged greater classroom participation and interaction by showing acceptance of, interest in, and constructive use of expressed student ideas. In the low scoring, or "directive" classrooms, the teachers tended to rely more on behaviors such as lecturing, giving directions, and criticizing. The inventory was selected as an independent variable in the hope that it would provide information concerning possible classroom or teacher influence on counseling criteria.

#### PROCEDURE

Pre-testing. During the first two weeks of February, 1966, the Michigan Student Questionnaire was verbally administered as a pre-test to students in seven fifth and sixth grade classrooms. Each classroom test administrator

was accompanied by a proctor and followed identical directions. Confidentiality and the importance of the students' answers were stressed. Test results were not made available to the classroom teacher but were available to the counselors upon request.

Selection and Assignment of Subjects. The subjects obtained for this project were also used in another study to evaluate the effects of counseling upon peer relations (Mayer, Kranzler, and Matthes, 1966). Thus, as in the other study, subjects were selected from a total of 265 students in seven fifth and sixth grade classrooms in two elementary schools. The schools were an urban parochial school and a rural public school. The fifth and sixth grade students from these schools who reported that they would like to "get along" better with their peers, and who ranked in the lower one-half of their classroom in sociometric status, were selected as possible subjects of the study. A total of 97 possible subjects was obtained. An equal number of the possible subjects was randomly assigned from each of the seven fifth and sixth grade classrooms to each of three treatment conditions: (1) Counseling, (2) Teacher-guidance, and (3) Control. In so doing, ten of the possible subjects were lost, leaving 87 fifth and sixth grade students as subjects of the study. For example, from a total of fourteen possible subjects identified in one of the classrooms, four were randomly assigned to each of the three treatment conditions making a total of twelve subjects actually used from one classroom in the study. The number of actual subjects obtained from each of the classrooms ranged from nine to eighteen.

Selection and Assignment of Counselors. Six counselors volunteered to participate in the study. Each was a graduate student at Indiana University who had previously had a counseling practicum and training in elementary school counseling. All but one of the counselors had previously taught in an elementary school.

Three counselors were randomly assigned to each school. Within schools, each counselor was randomly assigned four to five subjects from the counseling condition and four to five subjects from the teacher-guidance condition.

Counseling Condition Described. Subjects assigned to this condition received both group and individual counseling. Each group of four to five subjects met for 45 minutes a session, twice a week, for three weeks. Group counseling was followed by six individual counseling interviews in which the subjects met with their counselor once a week for 30 minutes.

The subjects in this treatment condition were identified to their teachers as students of low sociometric status who did not feel fully accepted by their classroom peers. Actual sociometric scores were not revealed. The teacher was informed that for many students this feeling of unacceptance is associated with characteristics such as low self concepts, underachievement, negative classroom behavior, and poor later life adjustment. Counselors attempted to work closely with the teachers of these children. The counselor-teacher conferences were employed to increase and to provide for mutual understanding, sharing of information, and planning sessions to assist children.

The counselor gave some structure during the first group meeting by informing the subjects that they all had indicated a desire to get along better with their classmates. A reassuring statement was added to the effect that "many students are known to have this feeling." They were told that the purpose of the group meetings was to provide them with a setting in which they could discuss this concern and any other concerns, troubles, or difficulties that they or their friends might have. They were also informed as to when and how often their group would meet.

The counselors attempted to follow a client-centered approach (Rogers 1951; 1957; 1959; 1961; 1962; Gendlin, 1961) during the counseling interviews. Each session was recorded on tape.

Teacher-guidance Condition Described. Subjects assigned to this condition were not called from their room nor did they receive counseling. They were identified to the individual teachers concerned in the same manner as the counseled students. The counselors studied the cumulative records of the subjects assigned to them. Suggestions such as the utilization of positive reinforcement and seating changes, and discussions to further clarify and understand the subjects' behavior were typical activities during the counselor-teacher conferences.

Control Condition Described. Neither the students nor their teachers were informed that the subjects assigned to this condition were subjects of the study. Thus, no unusual attention was given to them.

Post-testing. All treatments were terminated by the third week in April. The Teacher-pupil Relationship Scale was then administered as a post-test to all classrooms during the last week in April.

#### RESULTS

Data Analyzed. When analyzing the data, an attempt was made to control for different teacher behavior and influence by categorizing classrooms into two types: "indirective" and "directive". Michigan Student Questionnaire means, standard deviations, and numbers of students for classrooms are presented in Table 1. Each of the three highest scoring classrooms were found to differ significantly from each of the four lower scoring classrooms. The high scoring classrooms were classified as "indirective" and low scoring as "directive". Classrooms within each grouping were not found to differ significantly from one another. Thus, the three high scoring or "indirective" classrooms were compared to the four low scoring or "directive" classrooms.

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Table 1 About Here

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The criterion scores obtained from the Teacher-pupil Relationship Scale were analyzed by a 2 x 3 (classroom type x treatments) analysis of variance design (Lindquist, 1953). Two students from the counseling condition and one from the control condition were lost from the study due to administrative request from the schools. Their scores were omitted and the analysis was corrected for disproportionality.

There were no significant differences among treatments or between classroom types. However, a significant interaction among treatments and classroom types ( $P < .05$ ) was found.

Table 2 presents the number of students (n), means (M), and standard deviations (SD) for the treatments by classroom types. Differences among the means were analyzed by the Duncan's test for unequal n's (Kramer, 1956). Students from "indirective" classrooms, classrooms in which the students' attitudes toward their teacher and school work were highly positive, were found to rate subjects in the counseling condition ( $M = 283.80$ ) as "getting along" better ( $P < .05$ ) with their teacher than subjects in the control condition ( $M = 346.82$ ). The teacher-guidance condition was not found to differ significantly from the control condition. No significant differences were found among the treatment conditions within "directive" classrooms.

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Table 2 About Here

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DISCUSSION

Classmates from "indirective" classrooms rated counseled students as getting along better with their teacher than controls. No differences were

found among treatment conditions in "directive" classrooms. The findings do not, however, indicate whether these apparently improved teacher-pupil relations in the indirective classrooms were due to a change in teacher and/or pupil behavior. Furthermore, the fact that differences were not found in the "directive" classrooms does not necessarily mean that they did not exist. Perhaps changes in teacher-pupil relations would be less likely to be observed and reported in "directive" classrooms due to the increased likelihood of authoritarian methods being used (Flanders, 1965).

If one were to accept the results at face value, it might be ventured that students from "directive" classrooms would be less likely to change their relationship with their teacher because they would not feel secure or safe enough, or perhaps not even get the chance to try new behavior. However, the experimenters believe that it is the teacher, more than the student, who determines the quality of the teacher-pupil relationship. Flanders (1965) has reported that teachers of "indirective" classroom climates show a greater interest in, acceptance of, and constructive use of expressed student ideas. In agreement with Flanders (1965) the counselors of the present study reported that the teachers from the "indirective" classroom appeared more interested in their students in that they sought more information and assistance to further understand and help their students than did the teachers from the "directive" classrooms. Flanders and Havumaki (1960) demonstrated, under experimental conditions, that the students' status among his peers was likely to increase if the student received supportive and constructive praise from the teacher. Perhaps, the teachers of the "indirective" classroom climates in the present study went out of their way to support and help their students whom they received assistance with and this was perceived by classmates as better teacher-pupil relations.

It seems apparent that a number of factors could have contributed to the results of the present study. Only further research can determine which factor or combination of factors is the significant contributor.

#### CONCLUSIONS

There appears to be no simple answer to whether or not an elementary school counselor as conceived in this study, has a positive effect on teacher-pupil relations. The results of this study seem to indicate that an elementary school counselor who does counseling enhances teacher-pupil relations in "indirective" types of classrooms, while having little apparent effect on teacher-pupil relations in "directive" classrooms. In other words, the counselor's effect in teacher-pupil relations appears to depend on the type of classroom environment from which his counselees come. Replication of similar studies are needed to verify these findings.

**TABLE 1. NUMBER OF STUDENTS, MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR EACH CLASSROOM  
--MICHIGAN STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE AS CRITERION INSTRUMENT**

<b>Classroom</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
1	42	183.91	23.52
2	39	181.97	21.13
3	42	167.48	26.60
4	34	180.88	23.31
5	30	163.23	26.68
6	34	155.59	27.95
7	33	160.79	26.24

**TABLE 2. NUMBER OF SUBJECTS, MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF TREATMENT CONDITIONS BY CLASSROOM TYPE--TEACHER-PUPIL RELATIONSHIP SCALE AS CRITERION INSTRUMENT**

Classroom Type	Treatment condition		
	Counseling	Teacher Guidance	Control
	n	M	SD
"Indirective"	10	283.80	320.73
	M	25.38	41.37
	SD		
"Directive"	17	318.24	316.33
	M	32.29	44.60
	SD		

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